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C Section

UP AND COMER

Crow sneaks up on Grand Am field

In first season, he ranks 7th in points

By Tim Haddock
Signal Staff Writer

SAUGUS — When Rick Crow was younger, he would sneak into the pit area of Saugus Speedway to help the drivers work on their cars.

Even though at 15 he wasn't old enough to be in the area, it didn't deter the young Crow. He'd climb the fences that surrounded the pits and help out such racers as Alan Thacker and Tommy O'Mara.

"Out of all the classes I've run, this is the toughest. The cars are fidgety. When you think you got a hold of it, it comes up and bites you."

— Rick Crow

"When I was a kid, I used to follow them," Crow said.

Now at age 31, Crow is sneaking past cars on the Grand American Modified circuit at Saugus Speedway and few can stop him.

The Canyon High graduate earned his first feature win two weeks ago to go along with his five heat victories. Crow, who still lives in Canyon Country, has vaulted into the top 10 at No. 7 after starting the season in unimpressive fashion.

"I'm just now getting it figured out," said Crow who has run almost every class of car at Saugus Speedway since 1986. This is his rookie season racing Grand American Modified cars.

He started racing Jalopies in 1986 and transferred to Hobby Stocks in 1987, where he finished second in points.

Then he ran Street Stocks, winning rookie of the year honors in 1988 and he finished sixth in points in 1989. He moved to Pro Stock in 1990 and then to the Sportsman class for part of the 1991 season.

"I didn't care for that," Crow said of the Sportsman class, which will be eliminated next season. "It costs too much money for them guys to race (in the Sportsman class). They rip up their equipment."

And he didn't want to race figure eights, so he decided to enter the Grand Am division this season.

"Out of all the classes I've run, this is the toughest," Crow said. "The cars are fidgety. When you think you got a hold of it, it comes

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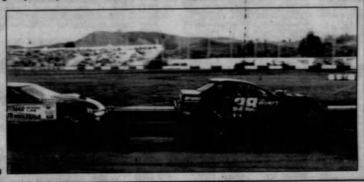
Photos by GARY THOMSEL/The Signal

Canyon Country racer Rick Crow has participated in virtually every division at Saugus Speedway since 1987. He recently won his first Grand American Modified feature race and ranks seventh in points.



Weather cancels Spartans contest

BURNSVILLE, Minn. — The rains came Friday morning and washed out the Santa Clarita Spartans' final baseball game in the 14-and-under Amateur Athletic Union National Championships.

The Spartans, who were defeated twice on Thursday and eliminated from advancing to the quarterfinals, led Champlin Park, Minn., 1-0 in the bottom of the second with one out and two men on when the rains came.

Andy Davidson started for Santa Clarita, but left in the second with a sore arm. Travis Richardson struck out two and yielded a hit in the second. He also picked a runner off second base to end the inning.

Jeff Gaeta singled and scored on Josh Underwood's base hit in the second.

Acting Burnsville Mayor Charles Crichton attended the game and sat in the Spartans' dugout as an honorary co-coach. Santa Clarita Mayor George Pederson was expected to attend, but the inclement weather most likely kept him away.

Two teams from Southern California did reach today's semifinals, Rancho Cucamonga and Fontana. The Spartans finished behind both teams at the qualifying tournament earlier this year.

Mike Granger (5-for-10) and Beau Gobel (2-for-4) each hit .500 for the Spartans. Granger also had an on-base percentage of .583. Adrian DeLaTorre had a team-high seven hits, while Bobby Graves, Gaeta and Granger each had five. DeLaTorre scored eight runs and Chris Wright received six walks.

Adam Green (6⅔ innings), DeLaTorre (5⅓), Davidson (six) and Richardson (one) each posted a 0.00 ERA. Graves struck out a team-high 12 batters in 7⅔ innings with a 1.83 ERA. Underwood fanned 10 in nine innings. Opponents hit just .177 against the pitching staff.

Price opens up 5-shot lead at PGA tourney

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — This PGA Championship has turned into a measuring stick for Nick Price's greatness.

A bogey-free, 5-under-par 65 Friday at Southern Hills Country Club put Price at 8-under-par 132, the second-best 36-hole score ever in the PGA.

And his five-stroke lead over Corey Pavin, Jay Haas and Ben Crenshaw going into today's third round was the largest ever at the midway point of this tournament.

"I don't know what's going to slow Nick down," Pavin said. "He's playing the best golf in the world right now. We are only halfway there, but he is certainly not the one I would want to be chasing."

Crenshaw, who prides himself in knowing a lot about the history of golf, had this assessment of Price.

"He's striking the ball as good as anyone since Ben Hogan or Byron Nelson," Crenshaw said. "He's a man in full flight."

If Price, the 37-year-old British Open champion, wins this tournament, it would make him the first since Tom Watson won the U.S. and British Opens in 1982 to take consecutive major championships, it would give him his third major in two years, and be his 16th victory worldwide in an incredible run that started when he won the 1992 PGA Championship.

A victory by the man who learned the game in Zimbabwe also would complete a sweep of the four major championships by non-Americans this year.

"The key to my success right now," Price said, "is that when I get over the shot I just try to do the best I can. I know it sounds simple, but I just have been very good at giving 100 percent to the next shot I have to play."

Indeed, he is playing so well that he has made the game that simple.

"The greens were softer and slower, and that allowed me to be a little more aggressive with my iron shots and also my putts," Price said.

"This is the position I want to be in," he said. "But there is still a lot of golf to play."

Price was not the only player to take advantage of softer, slower greens and slightly more forgiving pin placements.

Haas got into contention with a 66, despite a triple bogey on the ninth hole, and had a 30 on the back nine with a bogey on No. 18. Pavin and Crenshaw both shot 67, leaving the trio at 3-under-par 137.

Blaine McCallister missed the Southern Hills course record by one stroke with a 64 and was at 138, along with Masters champion Jose Maria Olazabal of Spain, who shot a 66 on Friday, and John Cook, who shot a 67.

U.S. Open winner Ernie Els of South Africa and Frank Nobilo of New Zealand were seven strokes back at 139 along with Gil Morgan, Glenn Day, Phil Mickelson and Australias Craig Parry.

Ian Woosnam of Wales stumbled to a 72 and was at even par after 36 holes, along with England's Nick Faldo and Greg Norman of Australia.

Colin Montgomerie of Scotland, tied with Price for the 2nd after the first round, faded badly, following his 67 with a 76 to be at 143. Tom Watson shot a 72 to fall to 1-over 141.

Fred Couples followed his first-round 68 with a 74, while Arnold Plamer, playing in his 37th and last PGA, shot a 74 and missed the cut with a 153.

Also missing the cut was defending champion Paul Azinger at 149 in his second tournament back since cancer treatments.

While others attacked the course, none did it as effortlessly as Price. And that alone sums up the way his career has gone since he won the PGA in 1992.

"I think over the last two years I have been one of the three best players in the world," Price said. "I think this year Greg (Norman) and I have played better than anyone else."

Only two players have played the first 36 holes of the PGA Championship better than Price. Vijay Singh last year and Hal Sutton in 1983 finished the first two rounds at 131. Sutton won. Singh finished fourth.

And while four players have led the PGA by four strokes after 36 holes, no one has led by five.

Pitcher Orel Hershiser exits Dodger Stadium after picking up some belongings on day one of the strike Friday.

Associated Press

Walkout leaves all parties in a quandry

By Lee Bartelstein
Signal Staff Writer

SANTA CLARITA — Now what?

Under normal circumstances, players such as Hart High graduate Todd Zeile and former Canyon High standout Cory Snyder would know they have a job to do until, at least, the start of October.

But the players' strike has left everyone, including the only SCV players still in the majors, with more time on their hands than they might know what to do with.

Zeile was unable to be reached Thursday at the Cardinals' hotel in Miami, where St. Louis played. But Zeile's wife, former Olympic gymnast Julianne McNamara, said, "I'm not sure. First of all, we're going to wait and see what happens. Then we'll go from there."

Zeile's father, Todd Sr., wasn't sure either, especially considering the player has no house to live in.

According to the elder Zeile, one house suffered earthquake damage and another is not finished being built. Todd Zeile Sr. said he figures his son will first go to St. Louis and wait to see if the strike ends quickly. Then the family will return to Santa Clarita, staying either with the Zeiles or the McNamaras.

Todd the baseball player also might be kept busy with his duties as St. Louis' player representative. As events warrant, Zeile might take trips to New York to meet with Union Chief Donald Fehr or other player reps.

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Sides will meet with federal mediators

By Ronald Blum
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Day 1 of the baseball strike passed Friday with players and owners agreeing to meet with federal mediators in an attempt to settle a walkout that emptied the nation's ballparks and wiped out the weekend's games.

Management negotiator Richard Ravitch said he would meet next week with Labor Secretary Robert Reich. Donald Fehr, head of the Major League Baseball Players Association, said the union would speak with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service during the weekend.

"I don't know whether they're going to be of any help," Fehr said. "All I can say at this point, I don't think any harm will come from it."

Ravitch also was unsure whether mediation would help end a strike that has interrupted a season filled with record chases and playoff races.

"I think it's tough when a union won't talk about how much money they want to get," he said.

The sides met for two hours Friday, and both said there was no progress in solving baseball's first mid-season work stoppage since 1985.

"This has all the indications of being a long one," Fehr said during a another joint television appear-

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